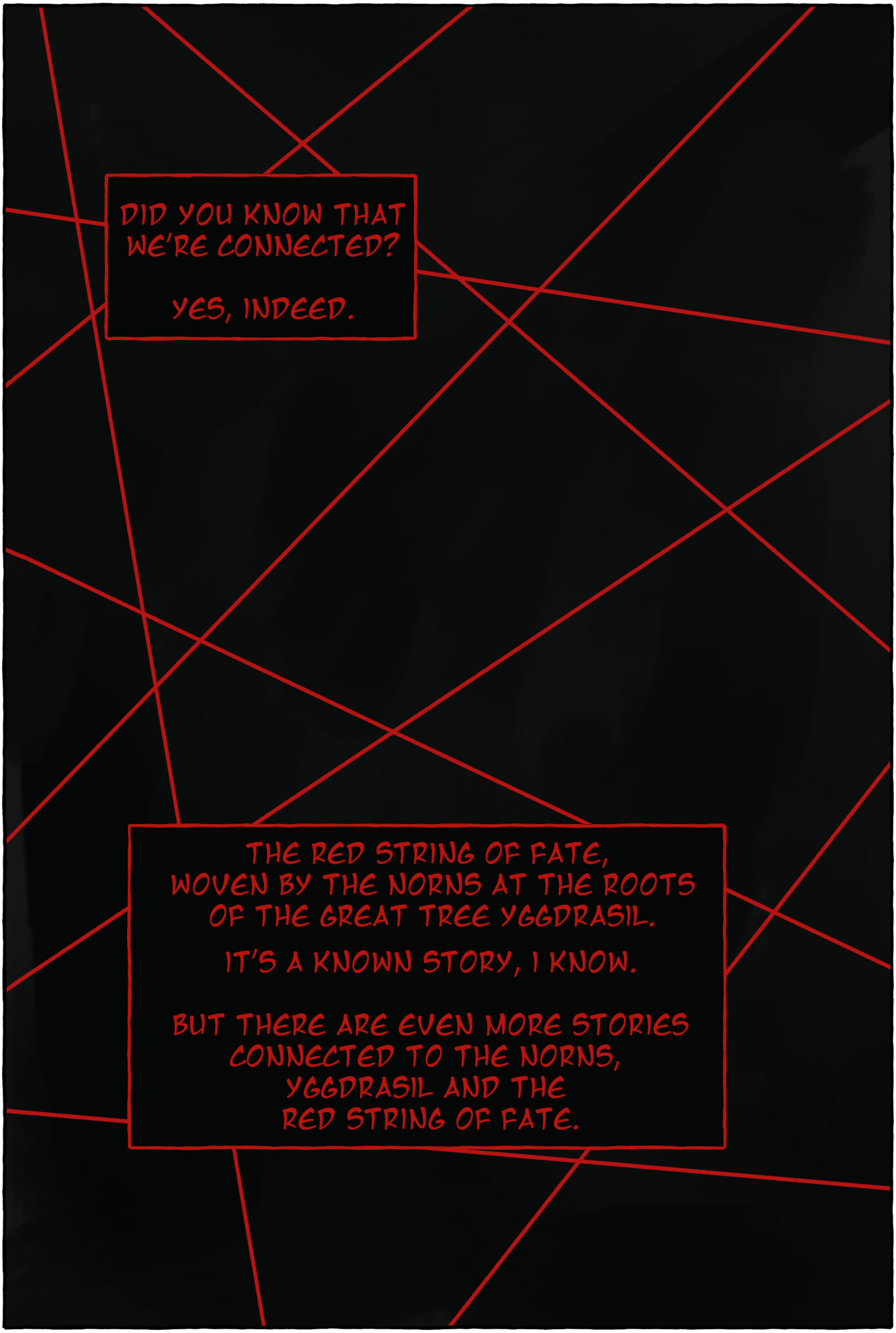
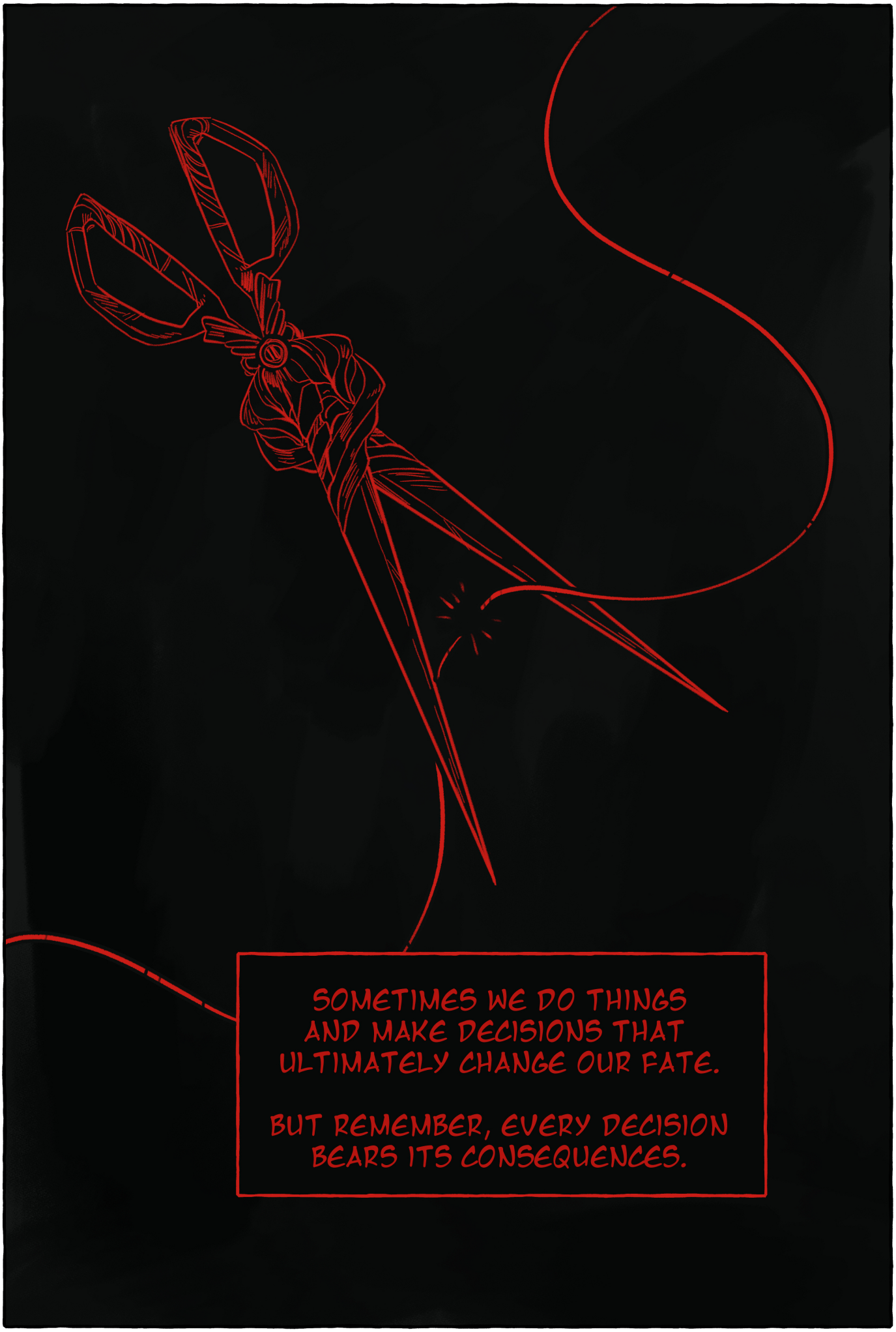
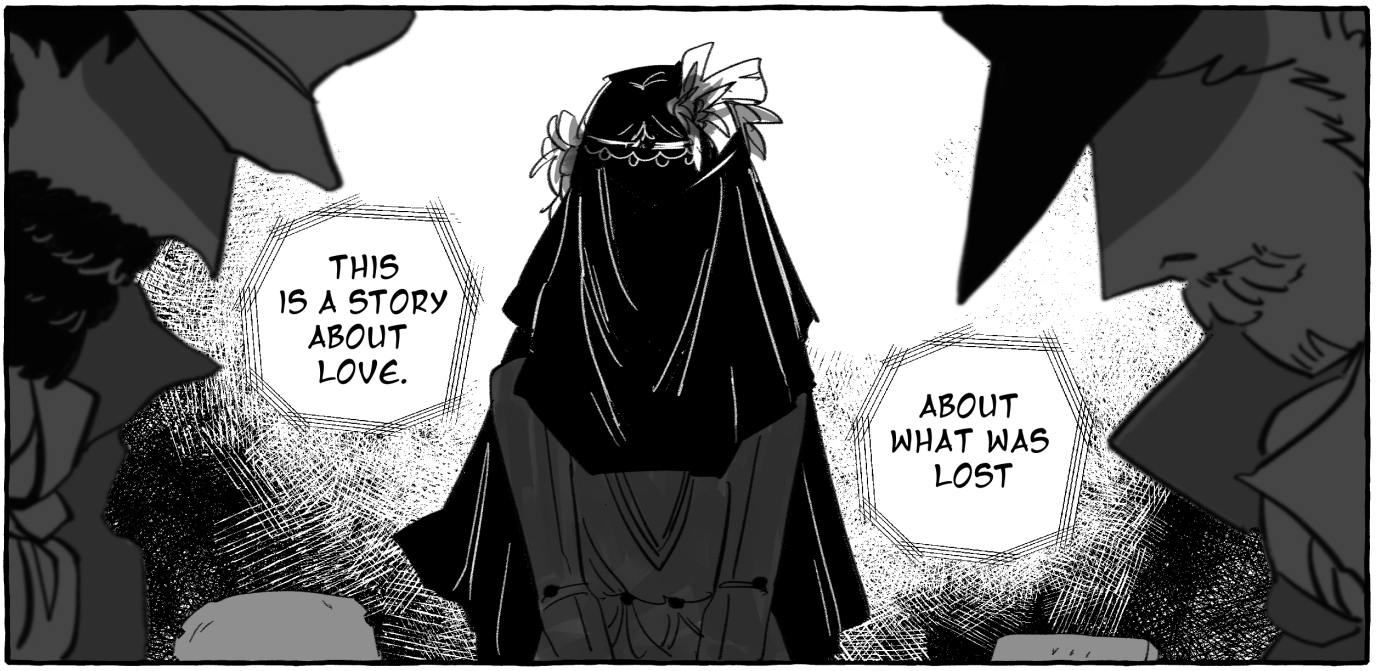
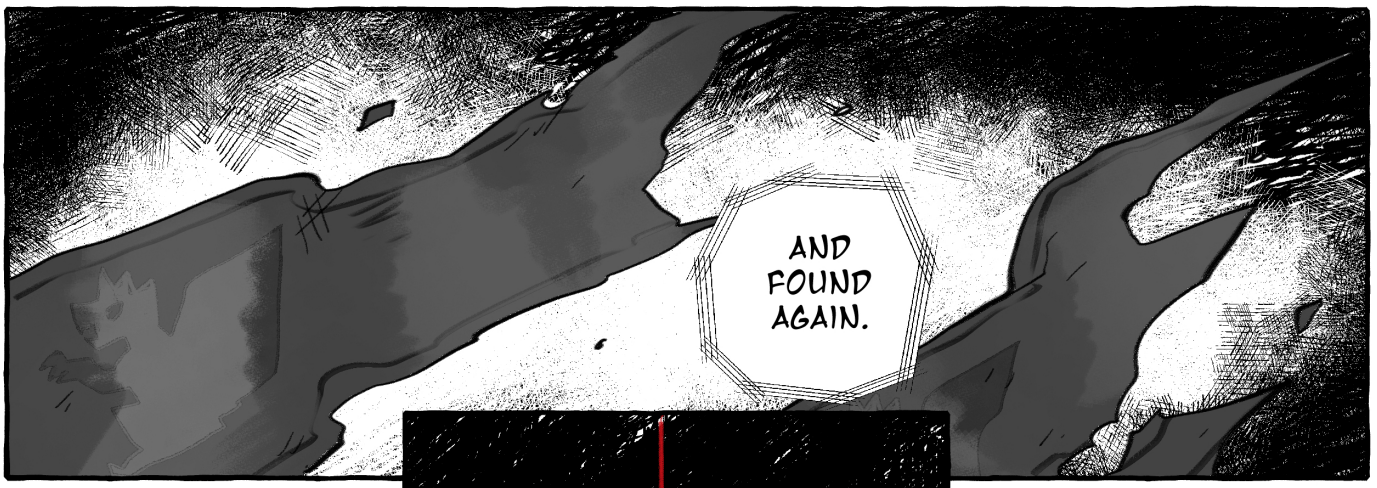

DID YOU KNOW THAT WE'RE CONNECTED?
YES, INDEED.
THE RED STRING OF FATE, WOVEN BY THE NORNS AT THE ROOTS OF THE GREAT TREE YGGDRASIL.
IT'S A KNOWN STORY, I KNOW.
BUT THERE ARE EVEN MORE STORIES CONNECTED TO THE NORNS, YGGDRASIL AND THE RED STRING OF FATE.


SOMETIMES WE DO THINGS
AND MAKE DECISIONS THAT
ULTIMATELY CHANGE OUR FATE.
BUT REMEMBER, EVERY DECISION
BEARS ITS CONSEQUENCES.



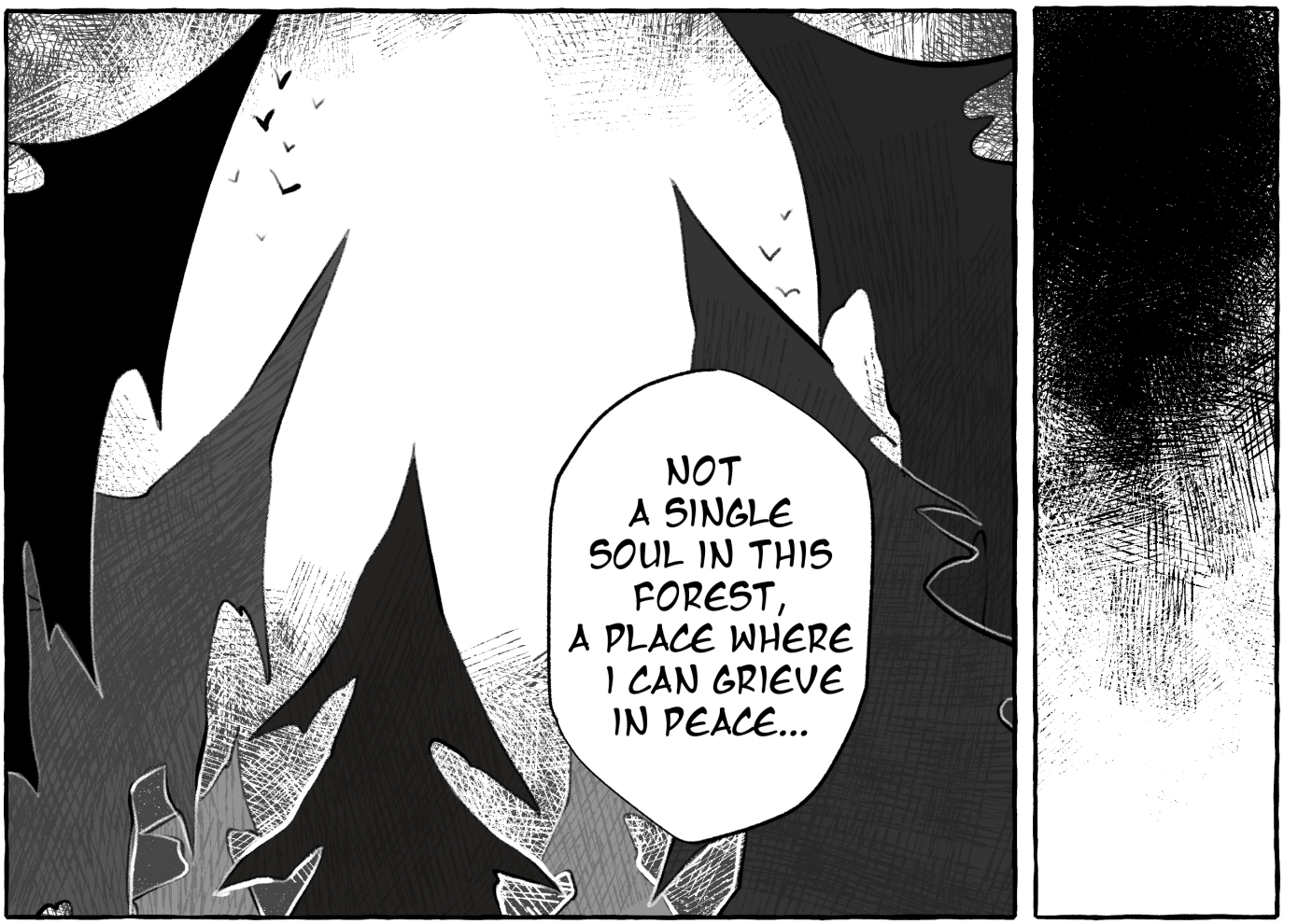


BECAUSE EVEN IN DEATH

THE STRINGS OF LOVE AND FATE WILL NEVER

MY HUSBAND SAM DIED IN THE WAR, LIKE MANY OTHERS DID AS WELL.
AFTER THE FUNERAL I SOLD THE HOUSE. I TOOK THE MONEY AND LEFT.
SOLD
GOT RID OF ALL MEMORIES. GOOD OR BAD, IT DIDN'T MATTER.
BEFORE THE WAR, I WAS AN ARTIST. AVALANCHE DEWITT, AN OIL PAINTER.
LIFE WAS GOOD.
MAYBE THE MOUNTAINS WOULD SOOTHE MY PAIN?

I BOUGHT A SMALL HUT IN THE WOODS, WHERE I COULD BE ALONE.


NOT A SINGLE SOUL IN THIS FOREST, A PLACE WHERE I CAN GRIEVE IN PEACE...

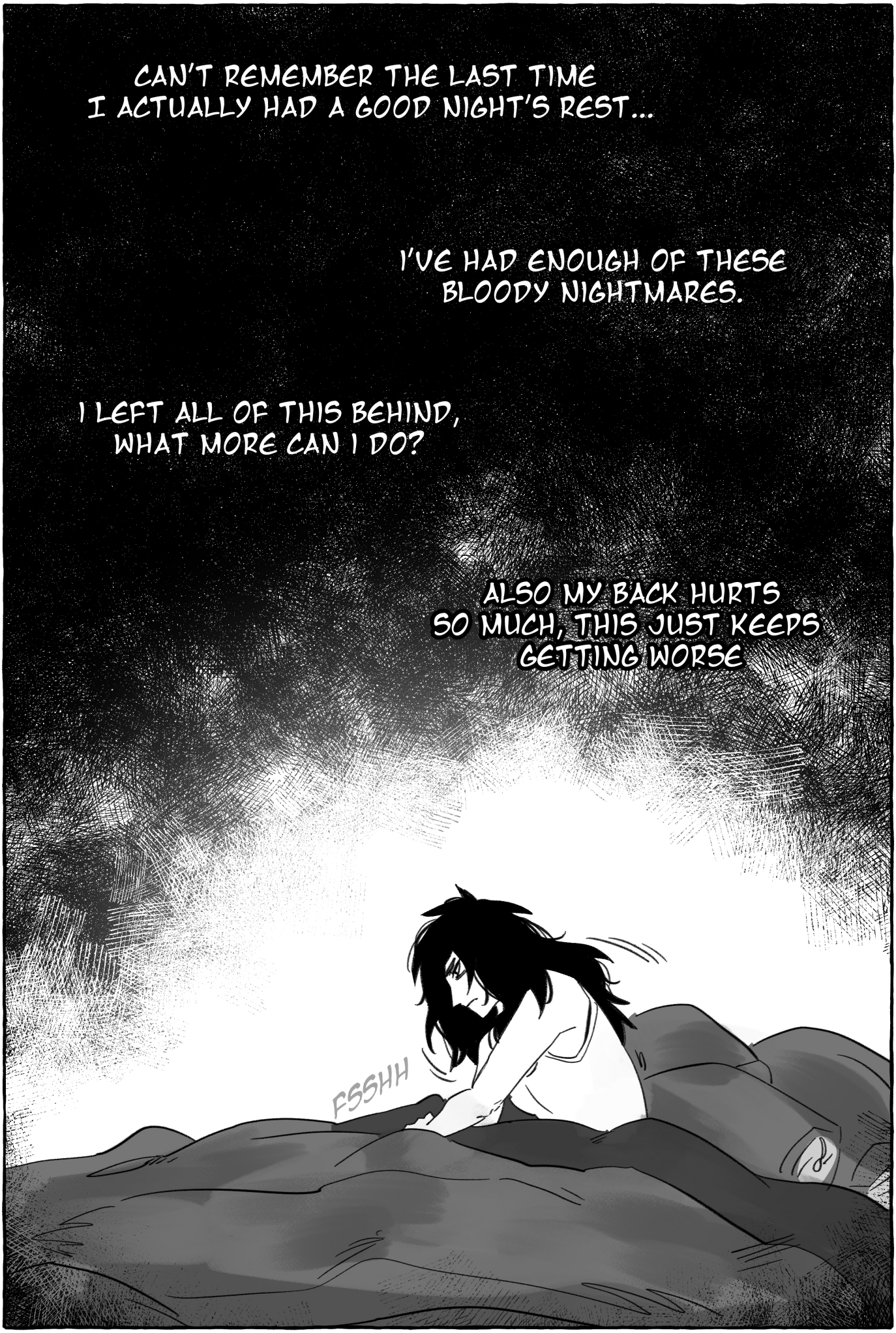
IT'S A GOOD LIFE, I GUESS.
QUIET, INDEPENDENT.
JUST ME AND THE MOUNTAINS.

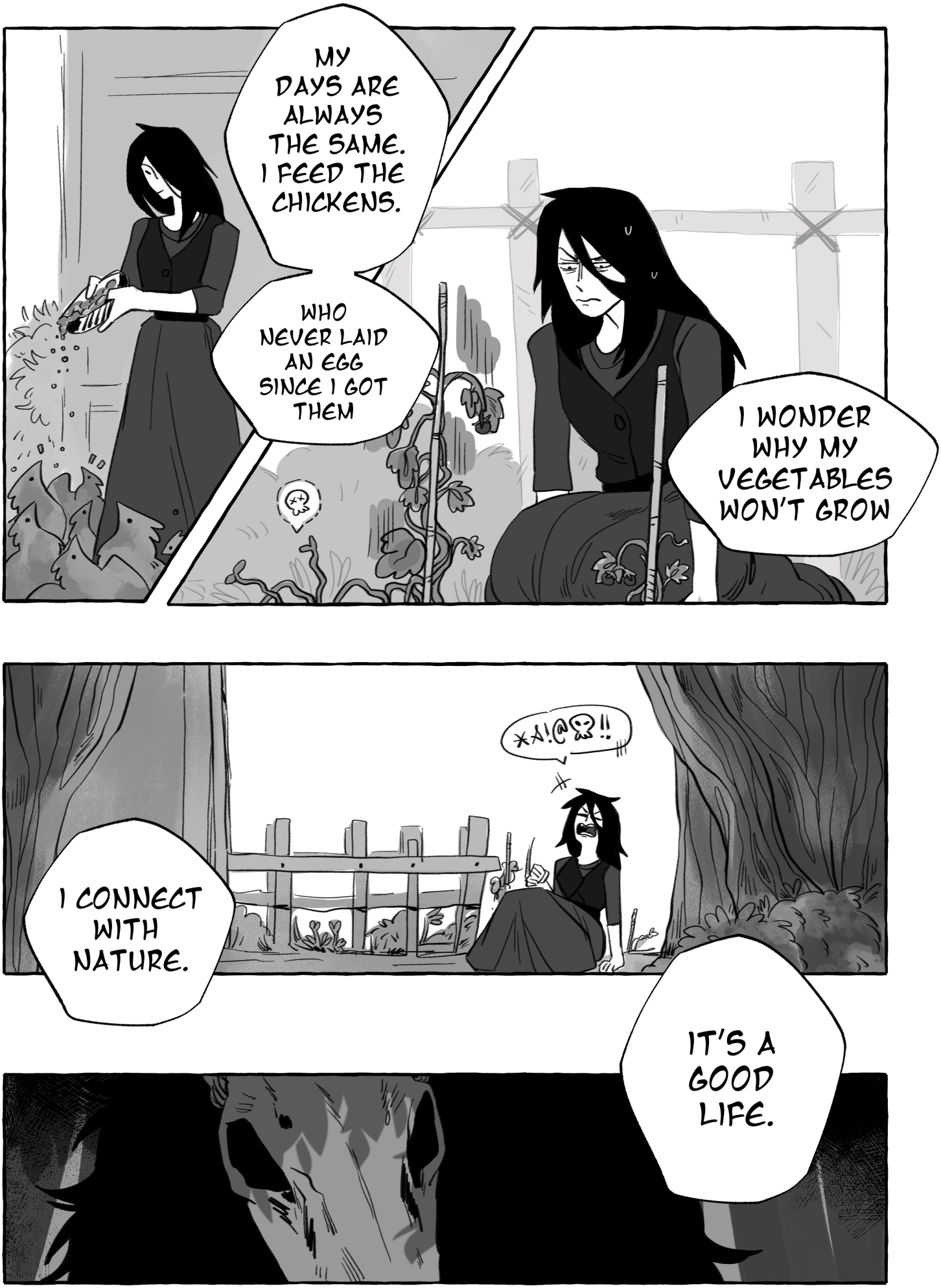
WELL, AND THAT THING, TOO. IT WATCHES ME FROM THE SHADOWS.
WAITING, LINGERING.

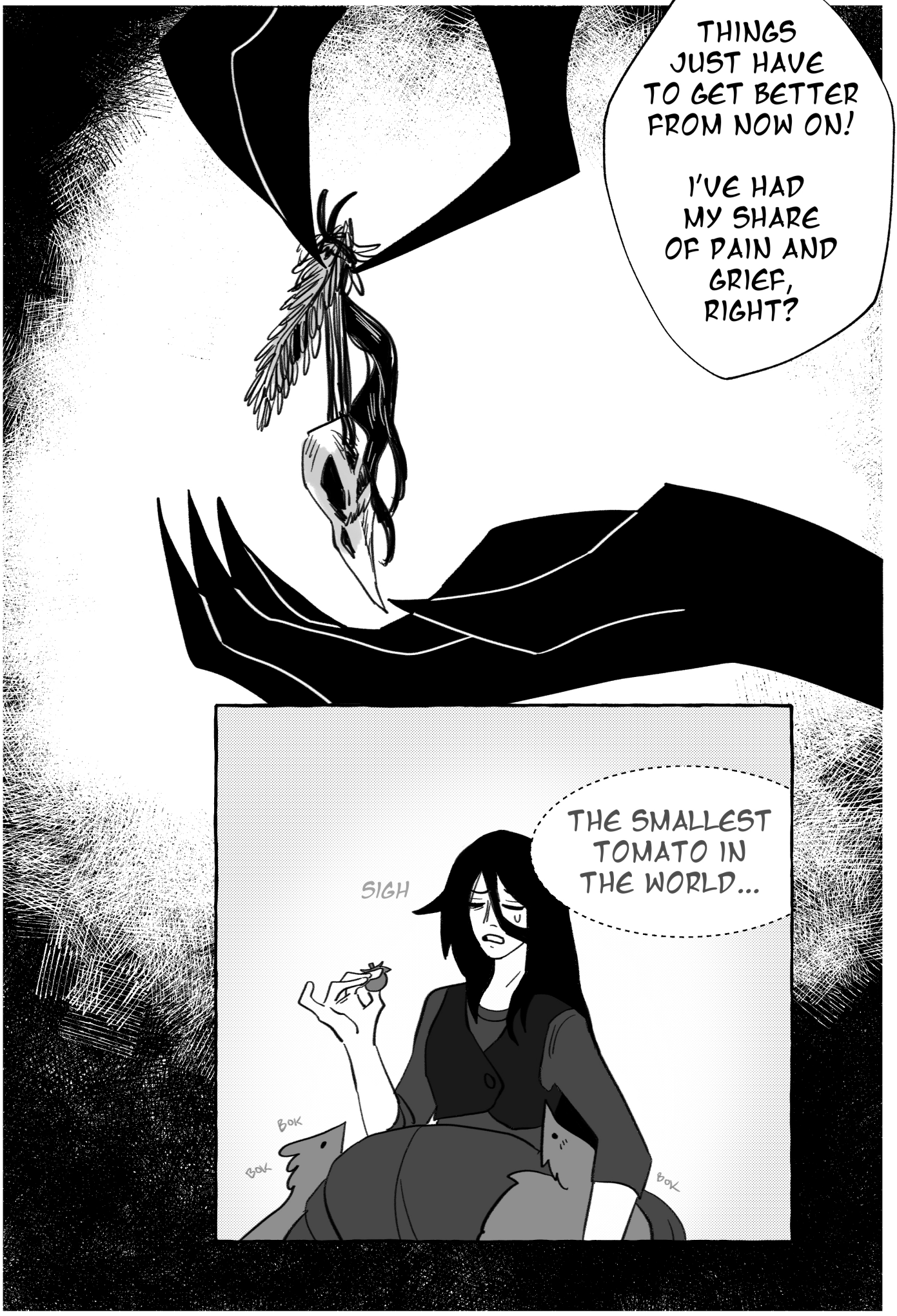
Chapter 1:
Ava

UGHH... ANOTHER NIGHT OF ALMOST NO SLEEP.

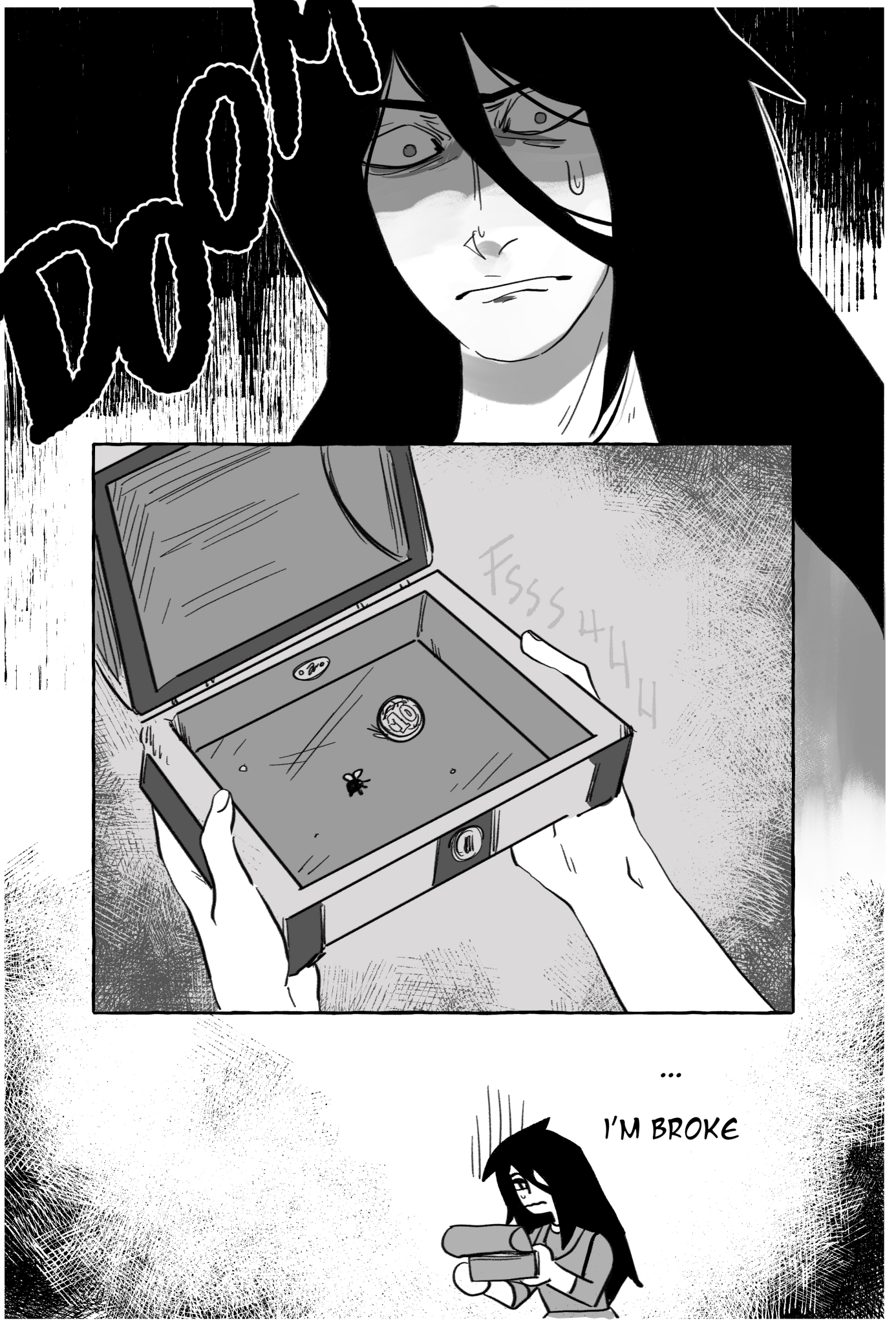
THIS SUCKS.


CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I ACTUALLY HAD A GOOD NIGHT'S REST...
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THESE BLOODY NIGHTMARES.
I LEFT ALL OF THIS BEHIND, WHAT MORE CAN I DO?
ALSO MY BACK HURTS SO MUCH, THIS JUST KEEPS GETTING WORSE
FSSHH

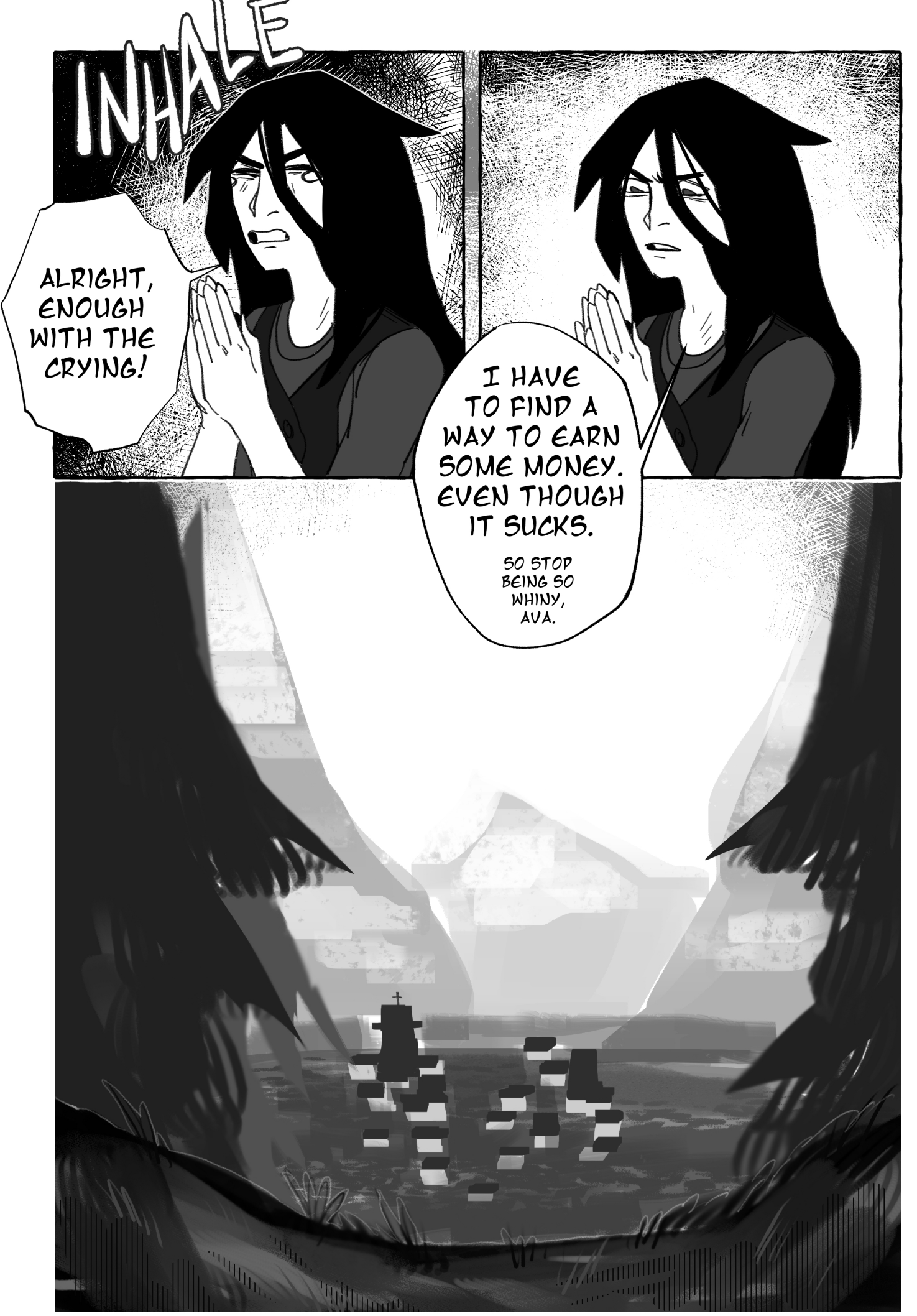

MY DAYS ARE ALWAYS THE SAME. I FEED THE CHICKENS.
WHO NEVER LAID AN EGG SINCE I GOT THEM
I WONDER WHY MY VEGETABLES WON'T GROW
*A!@☠!!
I CONNECT WITH NATURE.
IT'S A GOOD LIFE.


THINGS JUST HAVE TO GET BETTER FROM NOW ON!
I'VE HAD MY SHARE OF PAIN AND GRIEF, RIGHT?
SIGH
THE SMALLEST TOMATO IN THE WORLD...
BOK
BOK
BOK

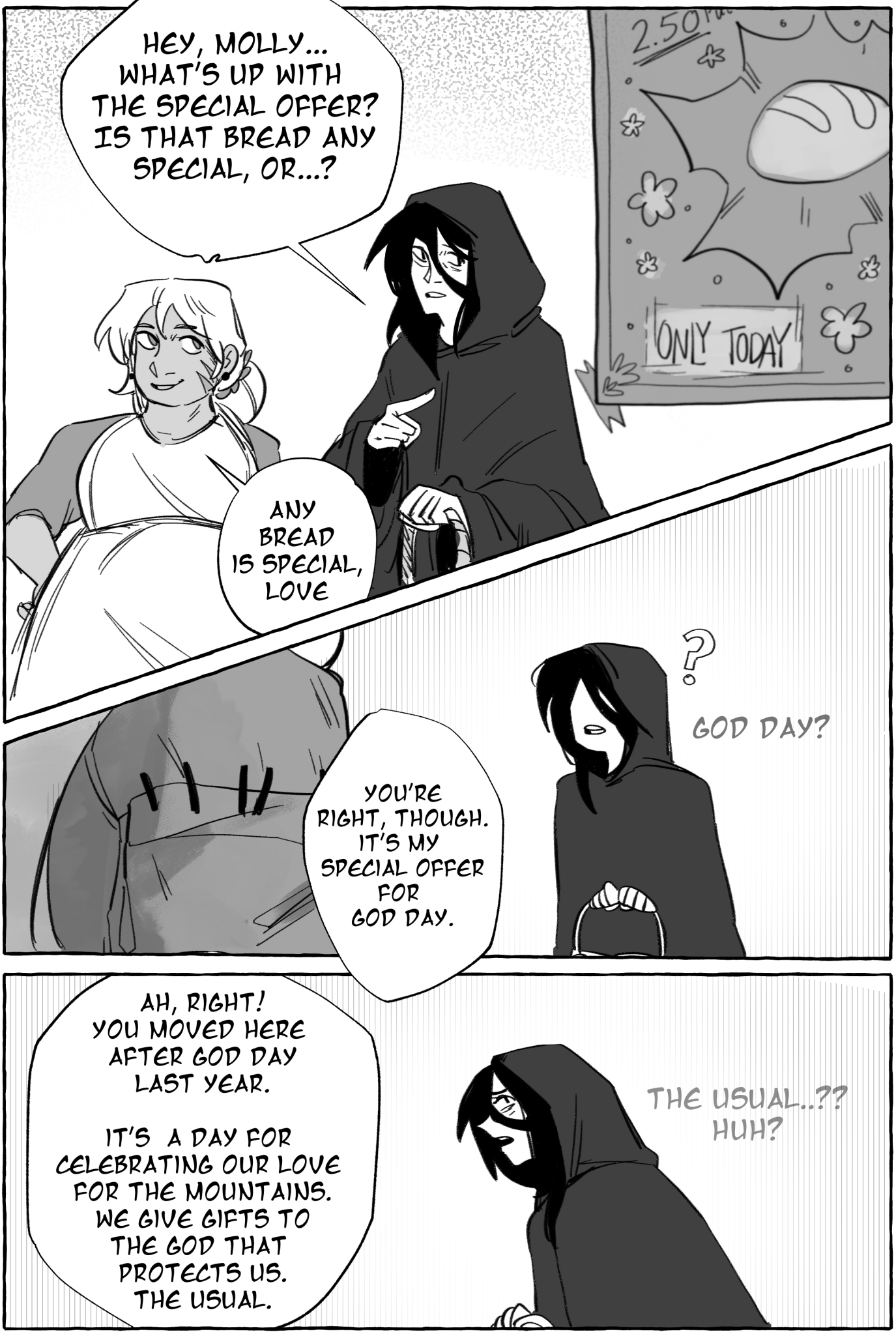
SUGAR
SUGAR, FLOUR... THERE IS NOTHING LEFT! EVEN MY SPOONS KEEP DISAPPEARING.
I SWEAR, IF THOSE CHICKENS GOT INTO THE KITCHEN AGAIN, I'LL-
"TSK K"
WHICH MEANS I HAVE TO GO TO THE VILLAGE...
THERE ARE PEOPLE THERE.....


DOOM
Fsss4444
...
I'M BROKE

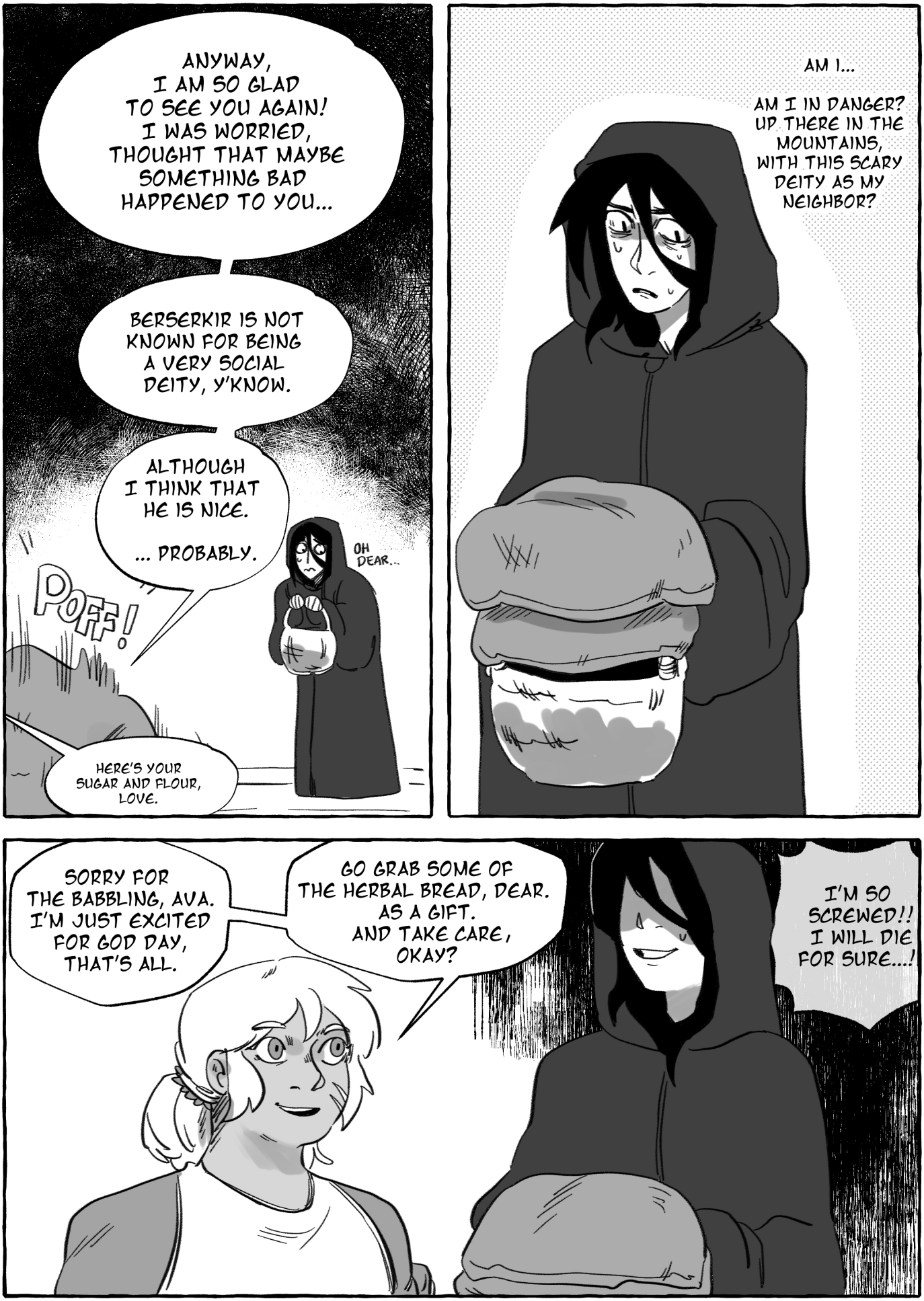
WHERE THE HELL DID ALL MY SAVINGS GO?!
SLAM!!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?
I DON'T- I'M NOT A FARMER
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE MONEY WITHOUT PAINTING...
WHAT SHOULD I DO...?


INHALE
ALRIGHT, ENOUGH WITH THE CRYING!
I HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO EARN SOME MONEY. EVEN THOUGH IT SUCKS.
SO STOP BEING SO WHINY, AVA.

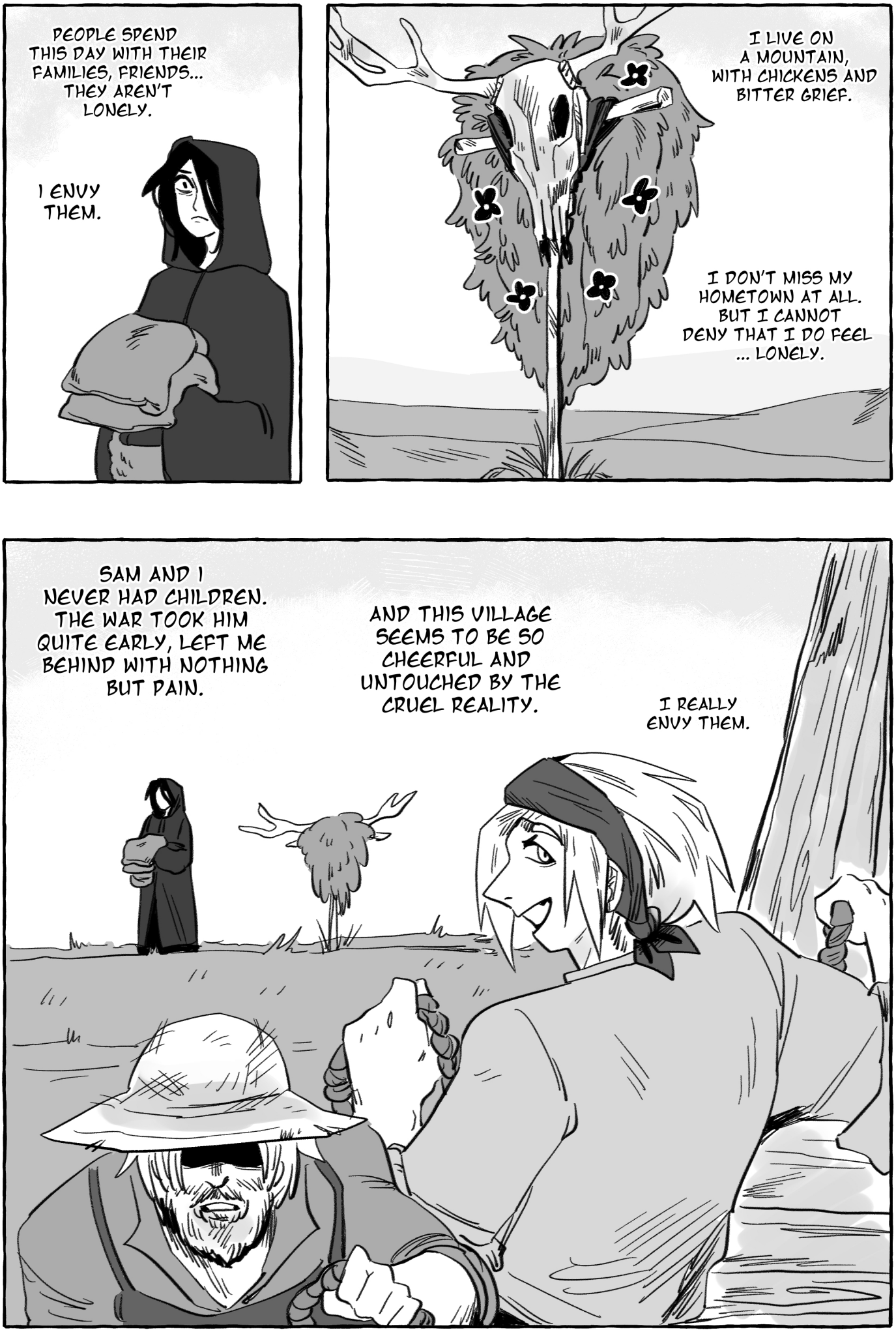
LATER THAT DAY...
OH! AVA! WELCOME, DEAR. HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE.
MOLLY'S Bakery
HI MOLLY. I NEED FLOUR AND SUGAR.
PLEASE

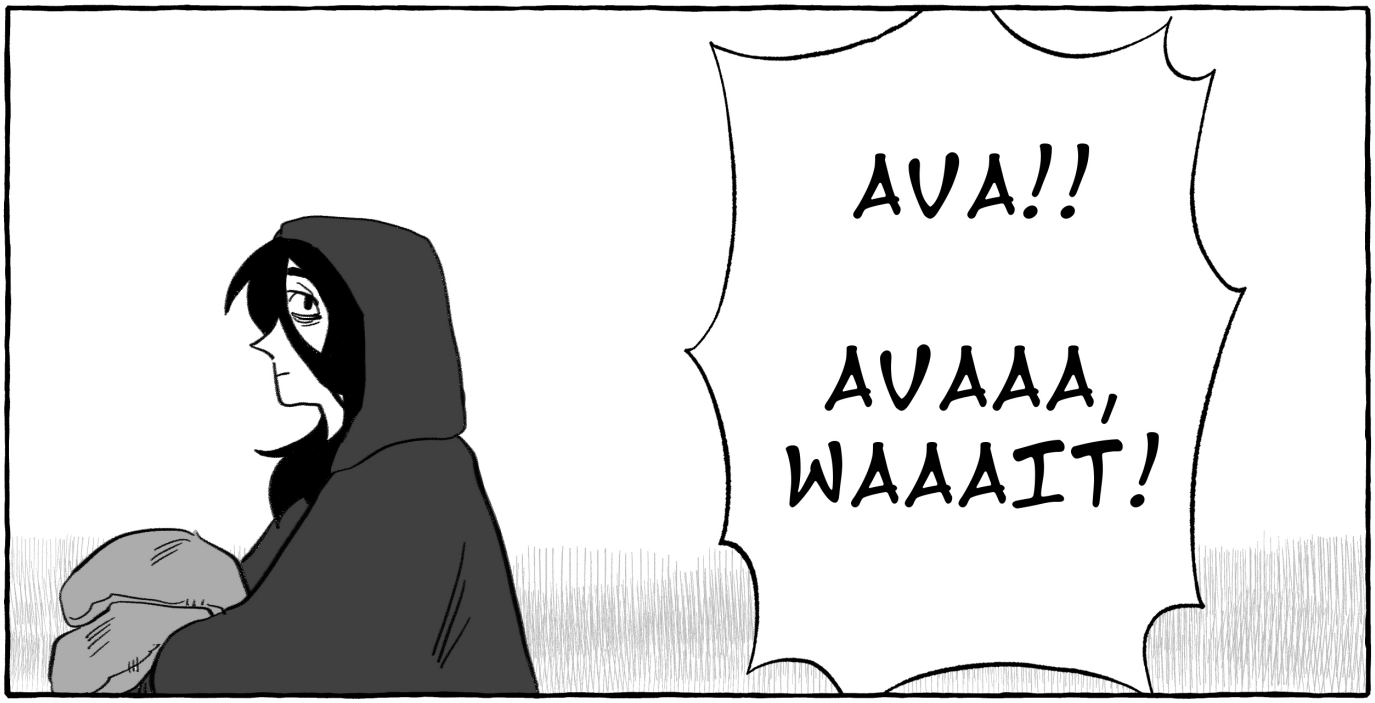

HEY, MOLLY... WHAT'S UP WITH THE SPECIAL OFFER? IS THAT BREAD ANY SPECIAL, OR...?
2.50
ONLY TODAY
ANY BREAD IS SPECIAL, LOVE
?
GOD DAY?
YOU'RE RIGHT, THOUGH. IT'S MY SPECIAL OFFER FOR GOD DAY.
AH, RIGHT! YOU MOVED HERE AFTER GOD DAY LAST YEAR.
IT'S A DAY FOR CELEBRATING OUR LOVE FOR THE MOUNTAINS. WE GIVE GIFTS TO THE GOD THAT PROTECTS US. THE USUAL.
THE USUAL..?? HUH?

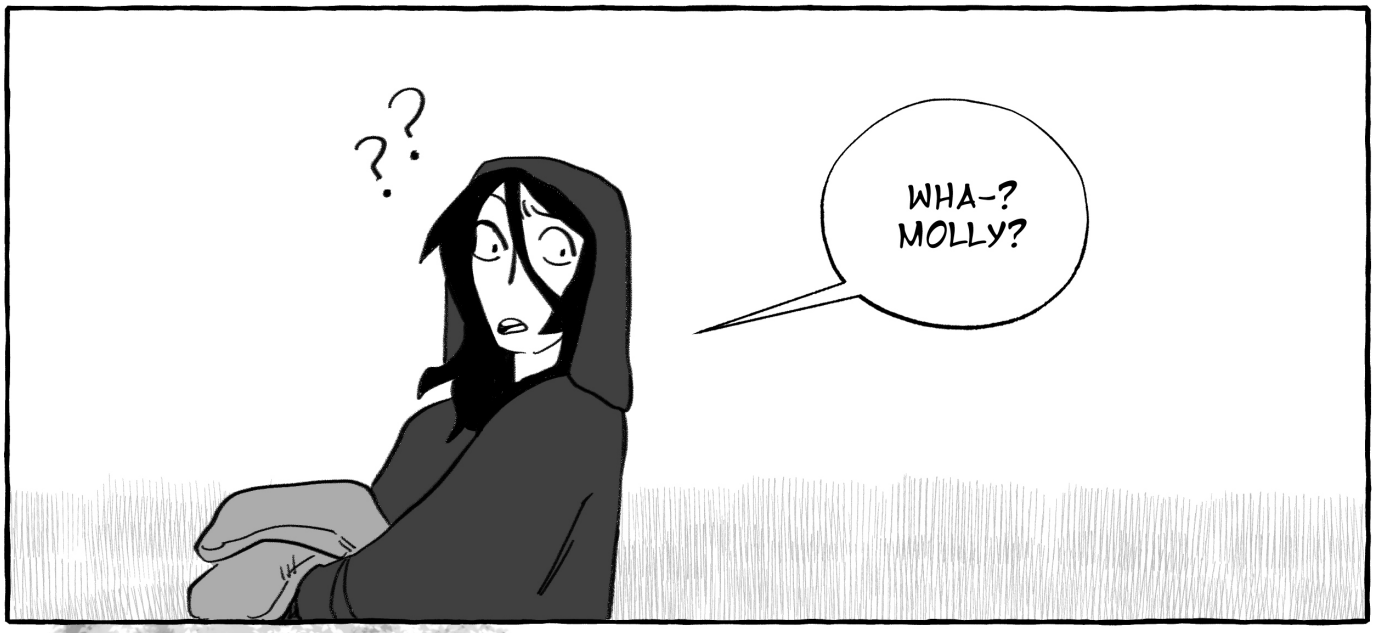
HE LIVES IN THE MOUNTAINS, IN A CAVE OVERGROWN WITH IVY AND WYSTERIA.
HE IS AN ANCIENT DEITY, A GOD THAT KEEPS THIS LAND ALIVE AND WELL.
HIS HEART IS MADE OF STONE AND HIS CLAWS ARE SHARP ENOUGH TO SLICE THROUGH METAL!
HE'S QUITE SCARY...
WE BRING HIM MANY GIFTS SO HE WON'T TURN AGAINST US, YOU KNOW?
IT IS FORBIDDEN TO GO TOO DEEP INTO THE FOREST AND THE MOUNTAINS ARE OFF LIMITS.
HE DOESN'T LIKE COMPANY AND ALLOWS PRETTY MUCH NO VISITORS UP THERE...
BUT... I LIVE UP THERE!!


ANYWAY, I AM SO GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN! I WAS WORRIED, THOUGHT THAT MAYBE SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO YOU...
BERSERKIR IS NOT KNOWN FOR BEING A VERY SOCIAL DEITY, Y'KNOW.
ALTHOUGH I THINK THAT HE IS NICE.
... PROBABLY.
POFF!
OH DEAR...
HERE'S YOUR SUGAR AND FLOUR, LOVE.
AM I...
AM I IN DANGER? UP THERE IN THE MOUNTAINS, WITH THIS SCARY DEITY AS MY NEIGHBOR?
SORRY FOR THE BABBLING, AVA. I'M JUST EXCITED FOR GOD DAY, THAT'S ALL.
GO GRAB SOME OF THE HERBAL BREAD, DEAR. AS A GIFT. AND TAKE CARE, OKAY?
I'M SO SCREWED!! I WILL DIE FOR SURE...!

GOD DAY, HUH?
AND A MYSTERIOUS, OLD GOD...
TROUBLE KEEPS FINDING ME, NOW MATTER HOW FAR I RUN.

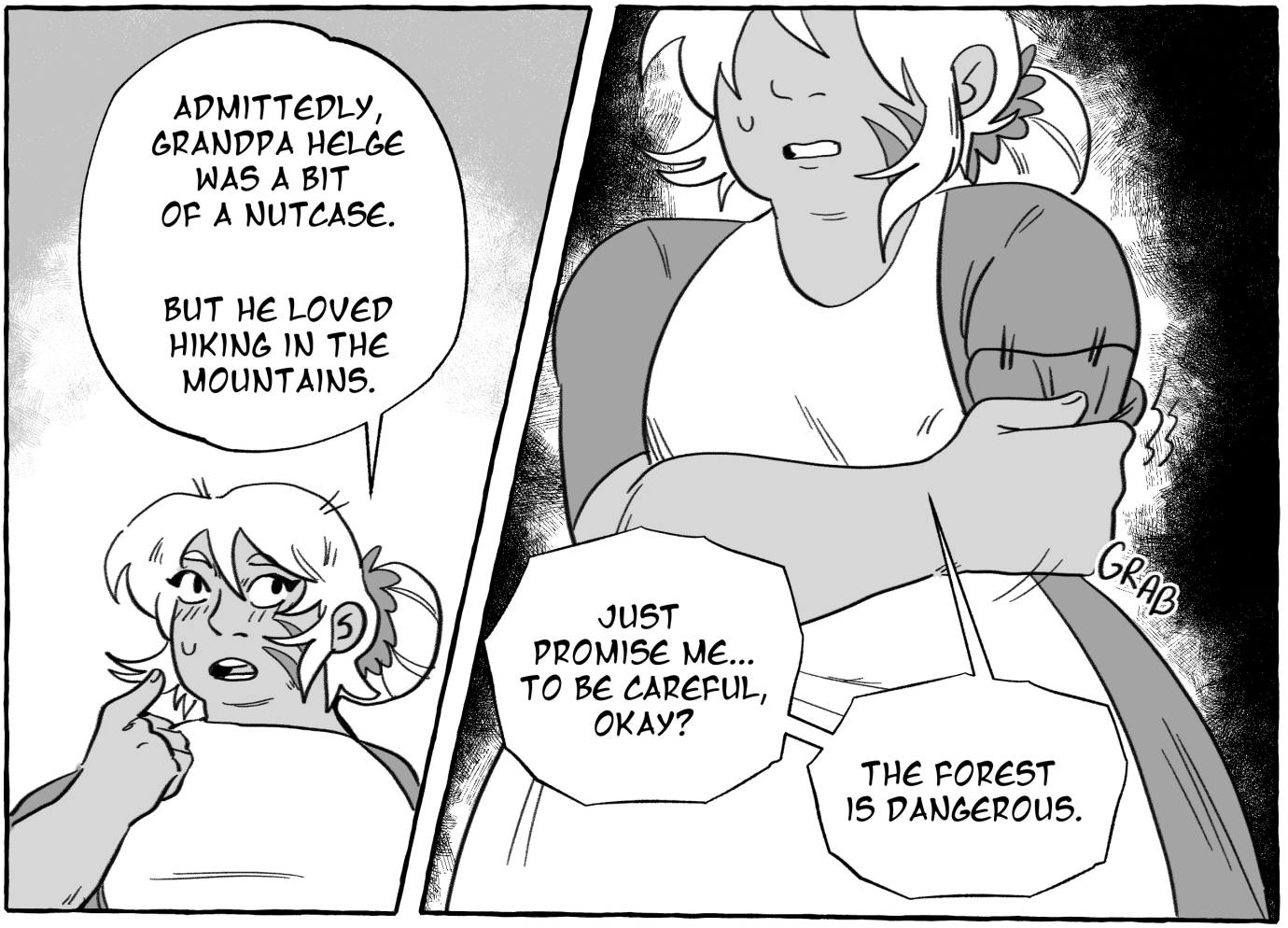

PEOPLE SPEND THIS DAY WITH THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS... THEY AREN'T LONELY.
I ENVY THEM.
I LIVE ON A MOUNTAIN, WITH CHICKENS AND BITTER GRIEF.
I DON'T MISS MY HOMETOWN AT ALL. BUT I CANNOT DENY THAT I DO FEEL ... LONELY.
SAM AND I NEVER HAD CHILDREN. THE WAR TOOK HIM QUITE EARLY, LEFT ME BEHIND WITH NOTHING BUT PAIN.
AND THIS VILLAGE SEEMS TO BE SO CHEERFUL AND UNTOUCHED BY THE CRUEL REALITY.
I REALLY ENVY THEM.


AUA!!
AUAAA, WAAAIT!

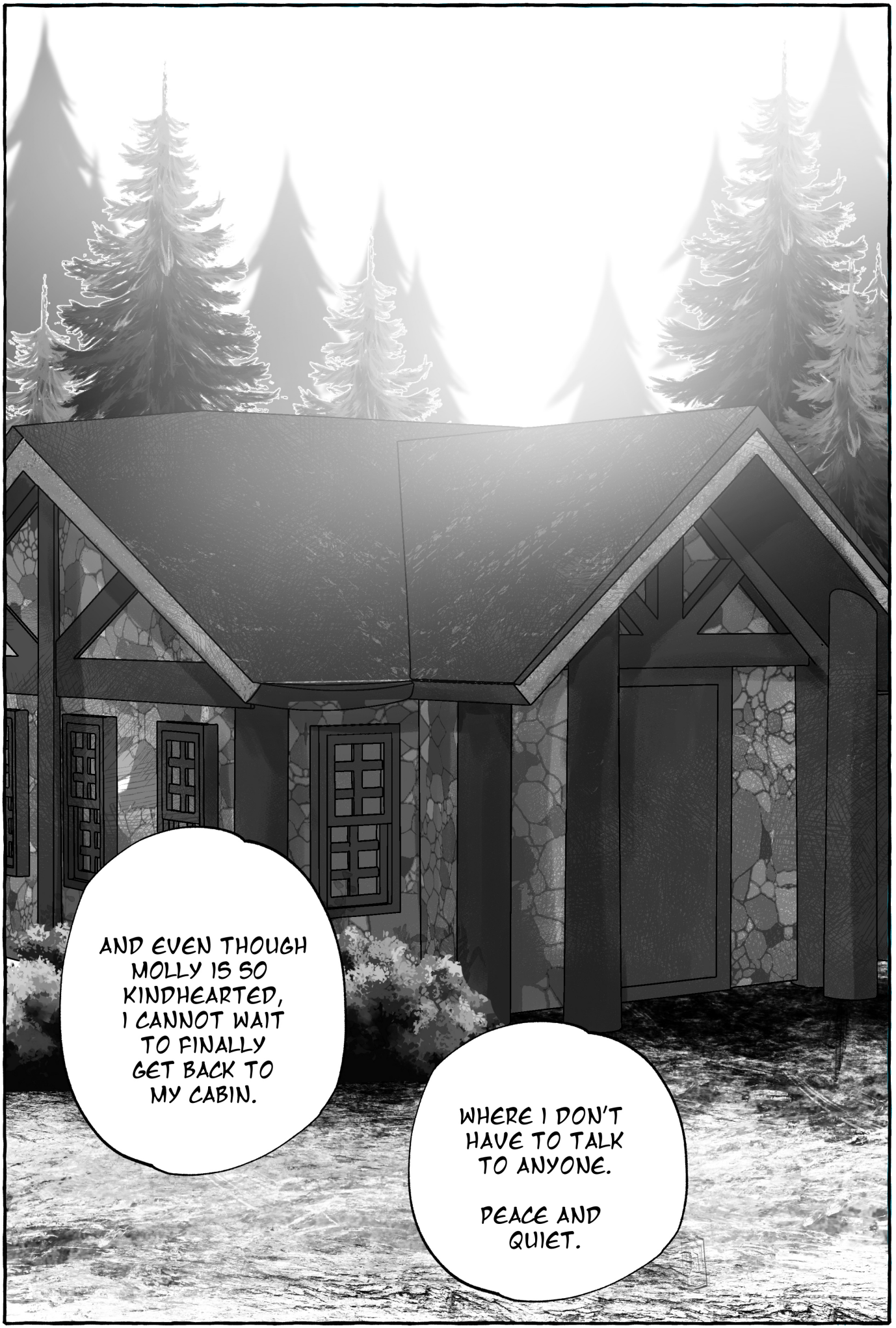

??
WHA-? MOLLY?

WAIT-!!
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
HUFF
HUFF

UHH, MOLLY...
WHO IS WATCHING OVER YOUR BAKERY...?
IT'S FINE, I'LL HEAD BACK IN A SECOND!
SHE IS KINDA WEIRD...
HUFF
HUFF
UGHH!! I HATE RUNNING SO MUCH-!
?
HERE! TAKE IT.
THAT IS AWFULLY SWEET OF YOU MOLLY, BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO RUN ALL THIS WAY JUST TO-
OH, SHUSH-
IT'S AN OLD NOTEBOOK FROM MY GRAMPS.
HE WROTE A LOT ABOUT THE FOREST AND THE MOUNTAINS.
AND, WELL, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED SOME ADVICE.



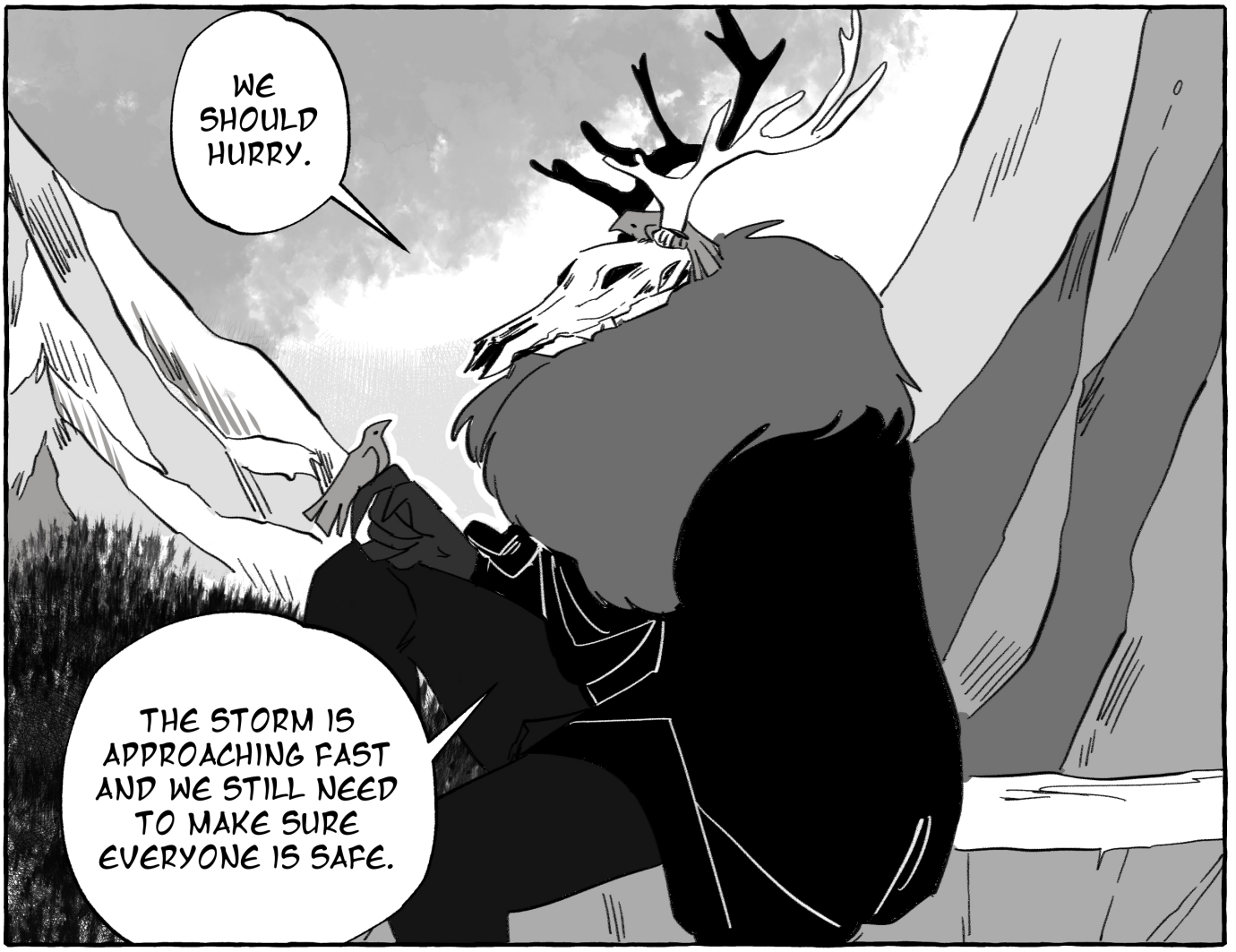
I SHOULD BE NICER TO MOLLY.
I DON'T DARE TO ASK, BUT THE SCARS ON HER FACE AND THE MISSING ARM...
THEY TELL A TERRIFYING STORY.


AND EVEN THOUGH MOLLY IS SO KINDHEARTED, I CANNOT WAIT TO FINALLY GET BACK TO MY CABIN.
WHERE I DON'T HAVE TO TALK TO ANYONE.
PEACE AND QUIET.

THE STORM APPROACHES.

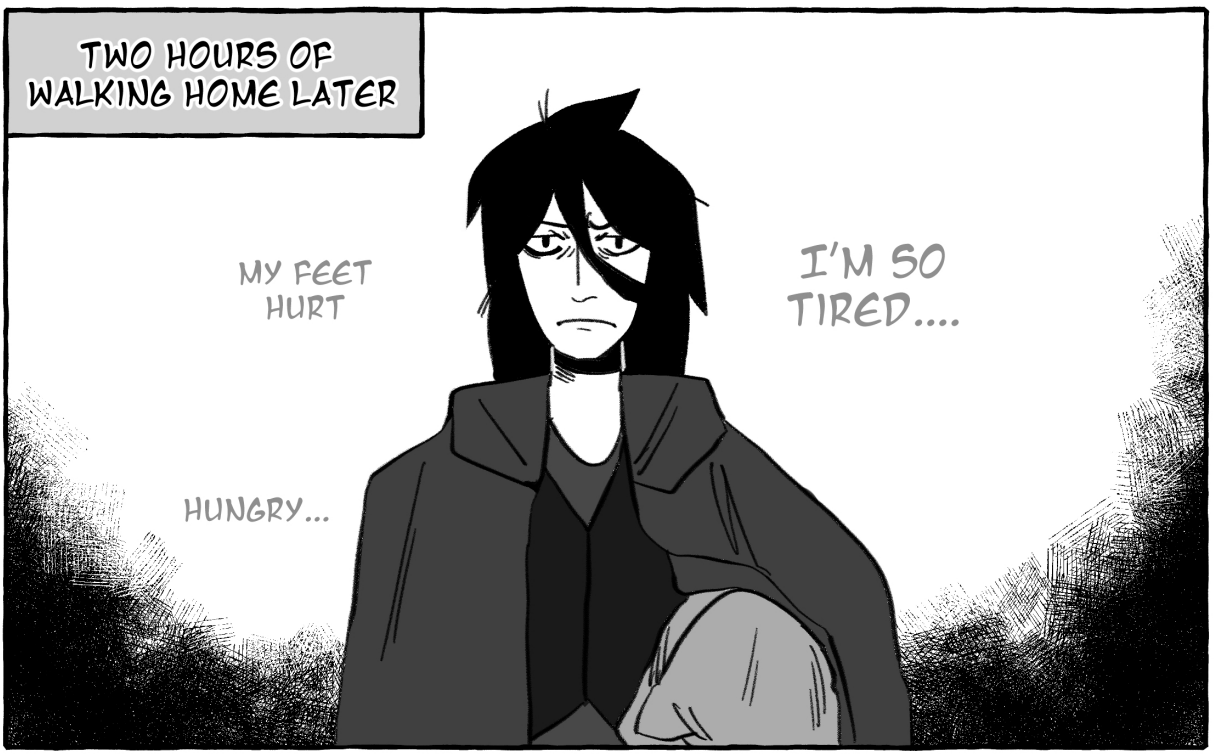
THE STAGE IS SET.

AND THE PLAY BEGINS.


WE SHOULD HURRY.
THE STORM IS APPROACHING FAST AND WE STILL NEED TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS SAFE.

CHIRP
HM?
OH, YES, OF COURSE. WE WILL ALSO VISIT HER.

TO MAKE SURE SHE IS SAFE, TOO.

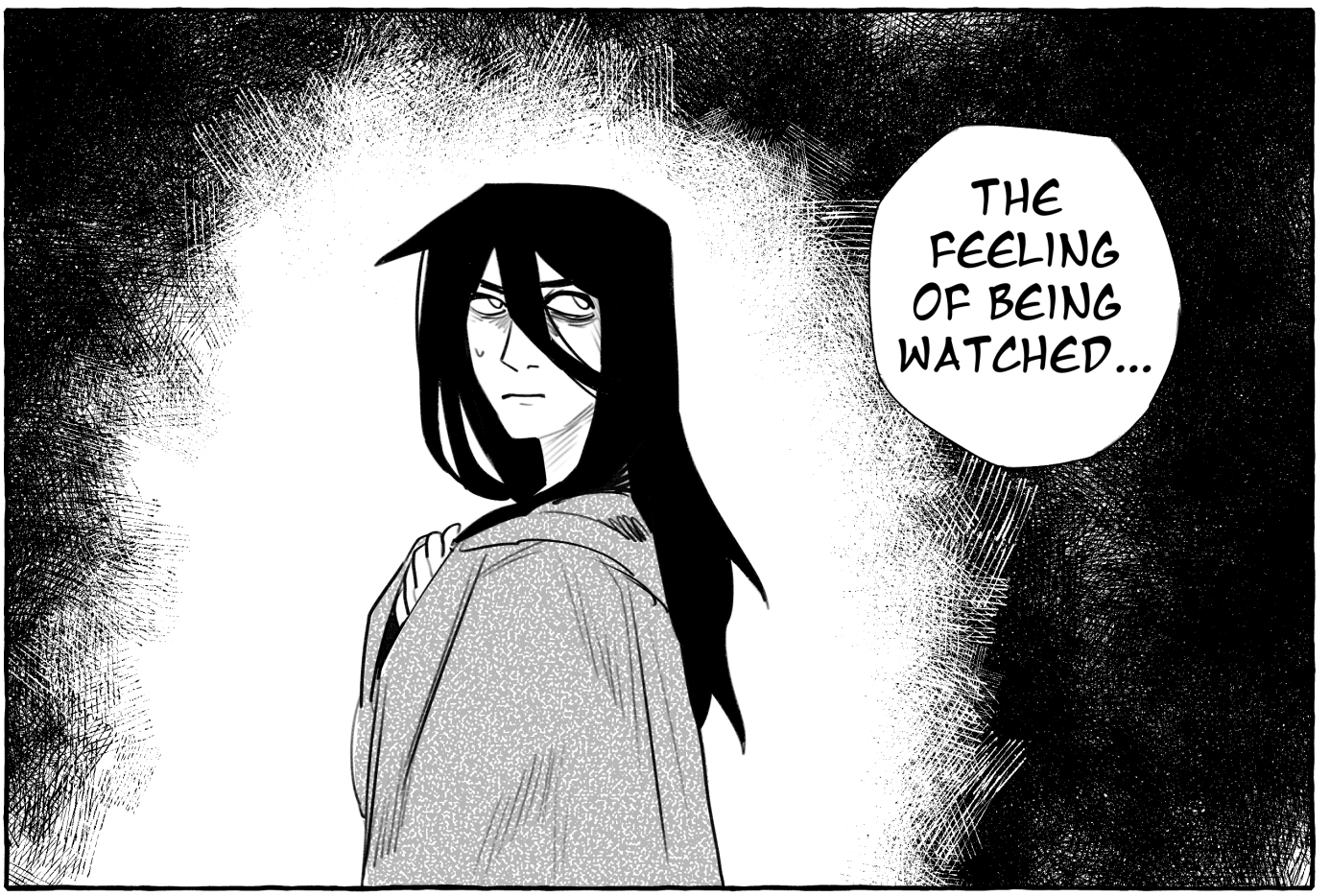

TWO HOURS OF WALKING HOME LATER
MY FEET HURT
I'M SO TIRED....
HUNGRY...

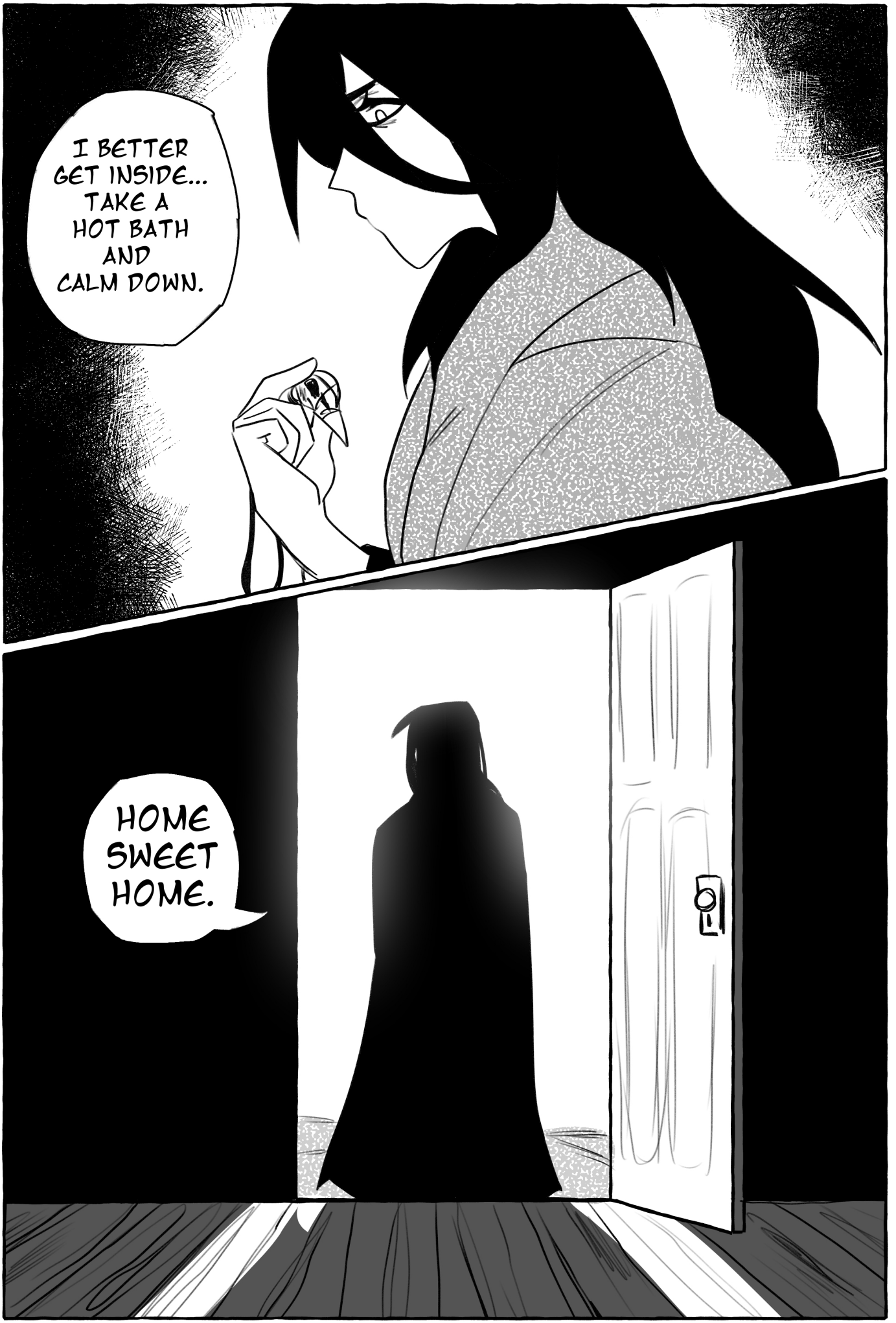
WHA-? WAIT, WHAT IS THAT...?

WHAT
IS THIS?

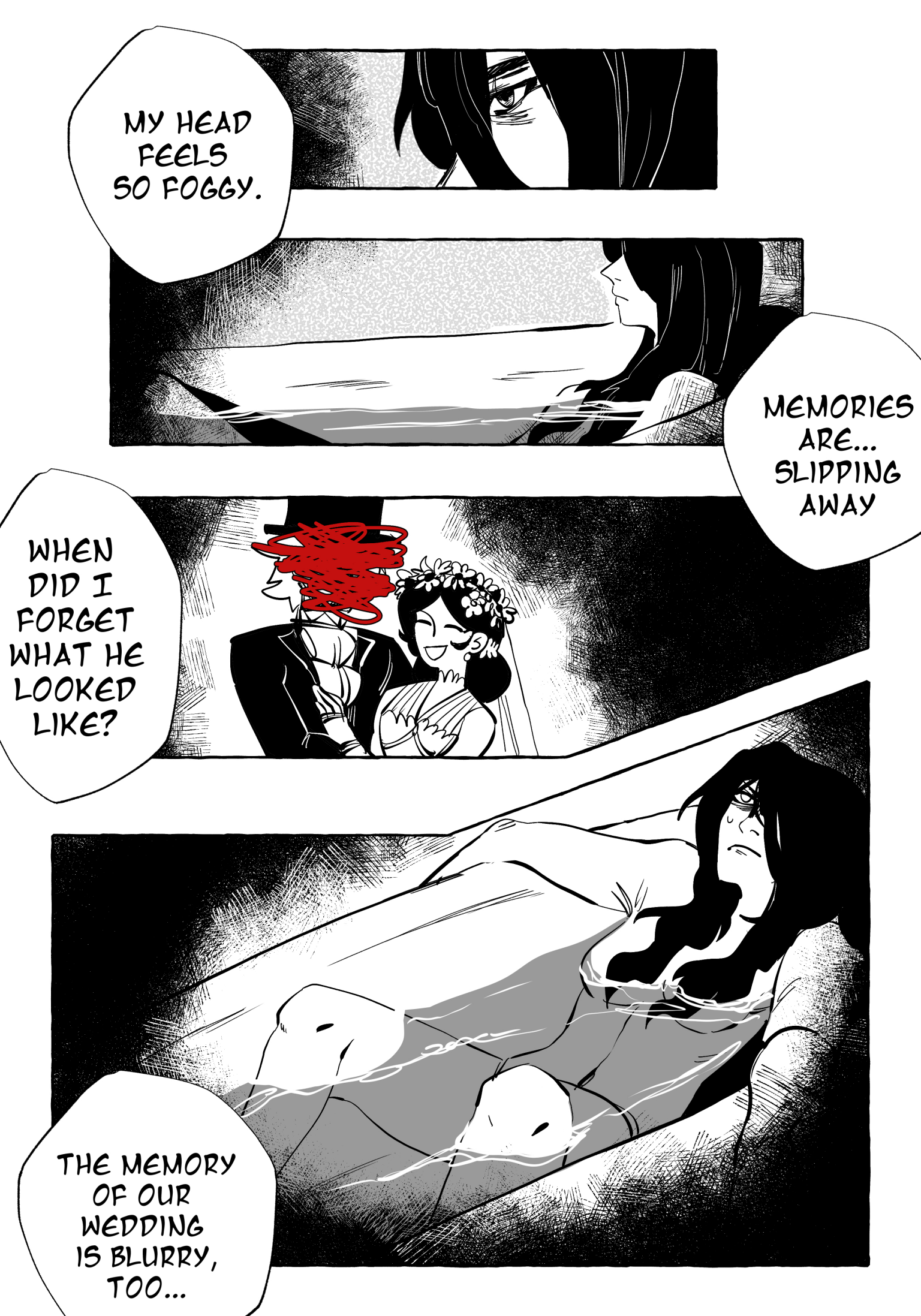
MMH...
FSHHHH

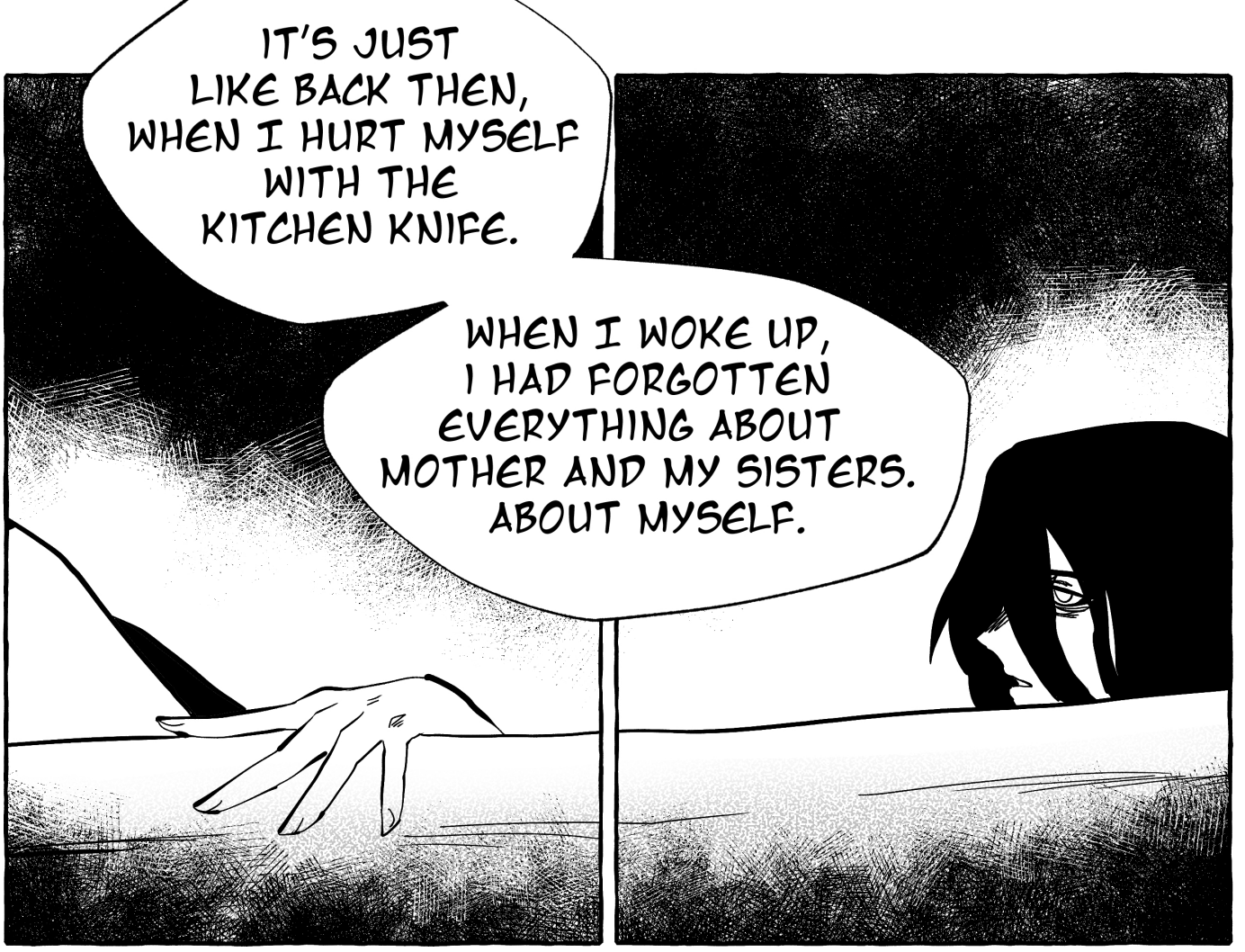
AHHH

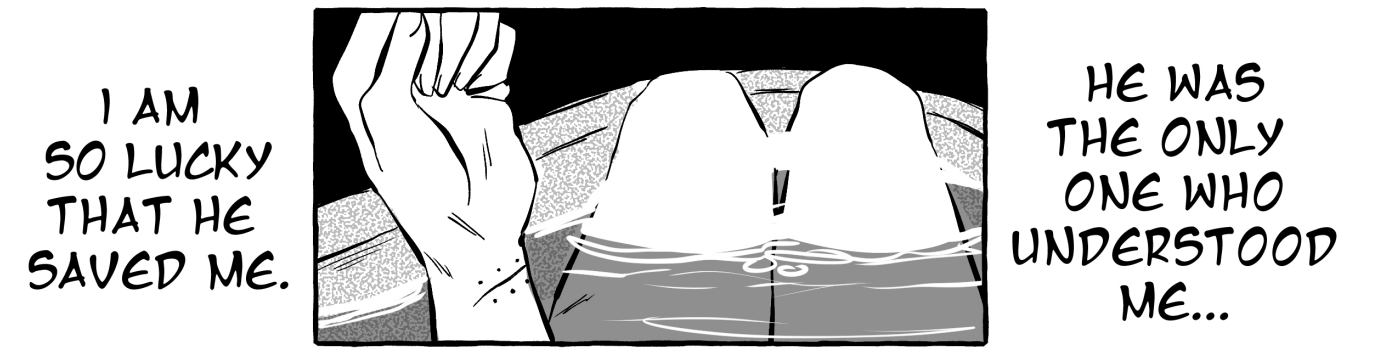

THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED...


I BETTER GET INSIDE... TAKE A HOT BATH AND CALM DOWN.
HOME SWEET HOME.

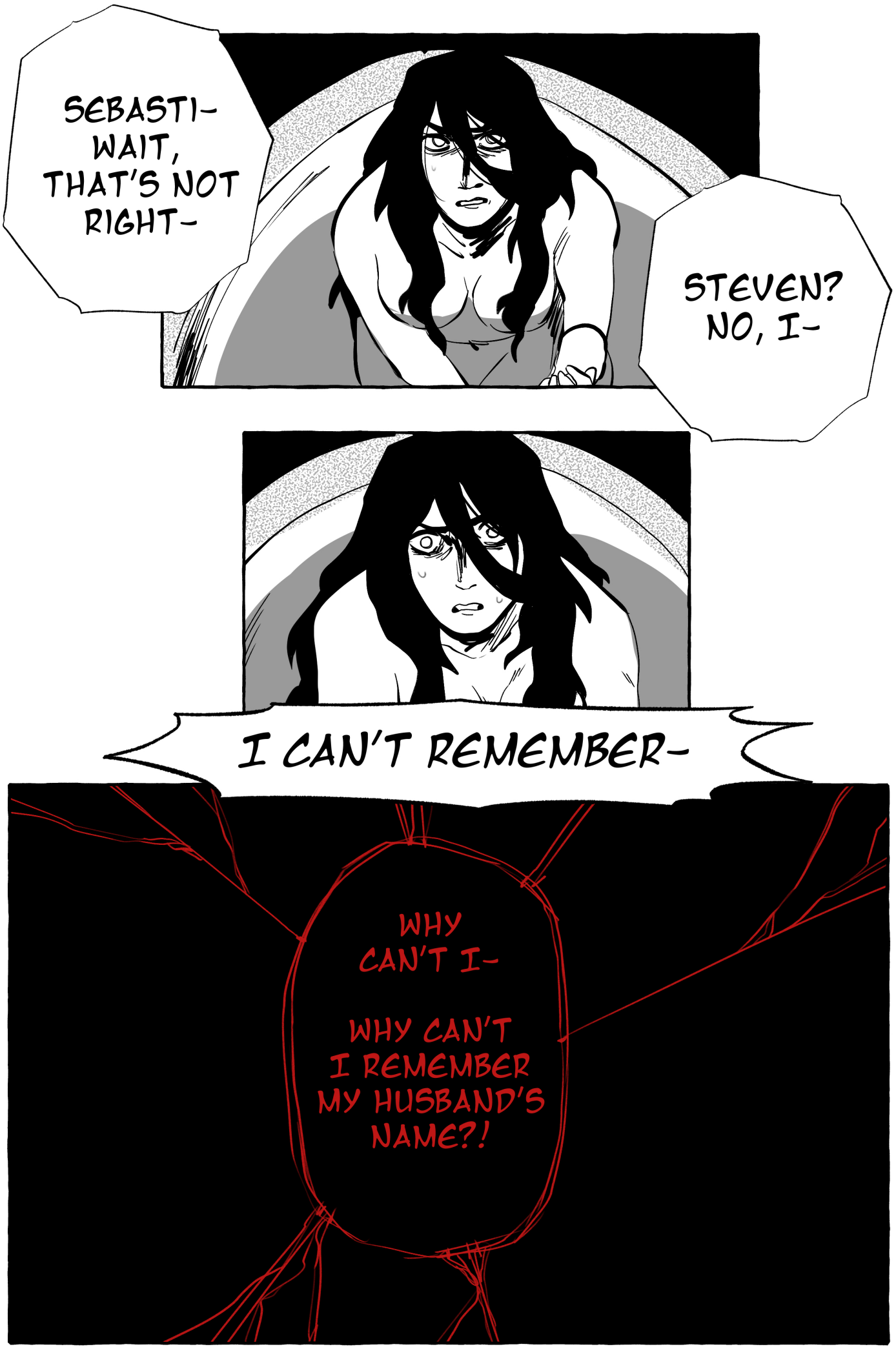
LATER THAT NIGHT


MY HEAD FEELS SO FOGGY.
MEMORIES ARE... SLIPPING AWAY
WHEN DID I FORGET WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE?
THE MEMORY OF OUR WEDDING IS BLURRY, TOO...


IT'S JUST LIKE BACK THEN, WHEN I HURT MYSELF WITH THE KITCHEN KNIFE.
WHEN I WOKE UP, I HAD FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING ABOUT MOTHER AND MY SISTERS. ABOUT MYSELF.


I AM SO LUCKY THAT HE SAVED ME.
!
HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTOOD ME...

SIGH



* END CHAPTER ONE